



**Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy  
for the Northern and Western Regional  
Assembly**

**Submission by  
Údarás na Gaeltachta**

**February 2019**

## **Introduction:**

Údarás na Gaeltachta welcomes the publication of the 'Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly'.

Údarás na Gaeltachta has provided previous input during the preparation of the Draft RSES which provides the context for considering this additional submissions.

In this further submission, Údarás na Gaeltachta makes specific comments relating to the Draft RSES document with a particular focus on the Regional Policy objectives as set out in the draft.

## **Údarás na Gaeltachta:**

Údarás na Gaeltachta acts as the statutory regional development authority responsible for the socioeconomic and sociolinguistic development of the Gaeltacht. Its statutory responsibilities are set out in the Gaeltacht Act, 2012 (<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/34/enacted/en/html>).

The organisation discharges a wide range of development functions and its development and investment programme forms an integral part of the economic, linguistic, cultural and social sustainability of the Gaeltacht. These investment and development measures provide key supports (financial, enterprise accommodation, training, skills development) to the local enterprise base and to community sector development initiatives.

## **Contact Details:**

We are pleased to have the opportunity to make this further submission and would be happy to expand on any points made if the Assembly or RSES team requires further information, supporting data or clarifications.

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## General Comments:

	<b>Regional Policy Objectives</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>8.</b>	Development of quality of life factors and sense of place, including harnessing the social, linguistic and cultural dimensions of the living experience of the Gaeltacht community.	It is imperative that there is recognition of the differentiated development priorities of the Gaeltacht regions in the local, county and regional planning framework
<b>14.</b>	Deliver at least 20% of all new housing in rural areas on brownfield sites.	This is welcome and essential to the vibrancy of rural Gaeltacht areas and the Region as a whole
<b>15.</b>	To support the regeneration and renewal of small towns and villages in rural areas	This is an essential objective to ensure the viability and sustainability of rural Gaeltacht areas and of the linguistic heritage
<b>20.</b>	Identify suitable development opportunities for regeneration and development that are supported by a quality site selection process that also addresses environmental constraints and opportunities.	Údarás na Gaeltachta can provide information concerning landbanks, industrial estates and enterprise infrastructure
<b>23.</b>	Within Gaeltacht areas and Gaeltacht towns in particular, emphasis shall be assigned to the impacts of proposed developments and their impact on the community of language and the maintenance and development of its socialisation networks.	We welcome the emphasis on impacts in relation to development in the Gaeltacht areas and the impact of same on the linguistic community  We suggest that specific reference is made here to the Local Language Plans as the

		appropriate framework within which to deliver on this objective
<b>24.</b>	To protect, conserve and enhance those natural, built and cultural heritage features that form the resources on which the regions tourist industry is based. These features will include areas of important landscape, coastal scenery, areas of important wildlife interest, historic buildings and structures including archaeological sites, cultural sites including the Gaeltacht areas, arts and cultural sites and the traditional form and appearance of the built environment.	The Gaeltacht area is recognised as a unique, cultural, historical area with a sense of place. A new Gaeltacht destination marketing brand has been developed - is it appropriate to reference this as key development measure which has been undertaken.
<b>34.</b>	Develop the water based leisure sector in the region in a sustainable manner making the best use of existing and planned infrastructure and resources, in a manner that is sensitive to the natural and cultural heritage resources.	Údarás na Gaeltacht support the development of water-based leisure sector within the Gaeltacht
<b>35</b>	To enhance access to our Tourist Assets, including the development of a Coastal Walking/Cycling route along the Western Seaboard, which extends generally along the route of the WAW and incorporates existing resources, such as beaches, ports, harbours, piers and marinas – This Coastal Route to be subject to a route option analysis, and feasibility study in Counties Galway, Mayo, Sligo Leitrim and Donegal. Stakeholders will include Fáilte Ireland, NWRA and the relevant Local Authorities and the public	The WAW is recognised as a strategic tourism project and includes the Gaeltacht areas of Donegal, Mayo and Galway.  Údarás na Gaeltacht to be referred to as a key stakeholder under this objective
<b>36.</b>	Promote the development of integrated walking, cycling and bridle routes throughout the Region as an activity for both international visitors and local tourists in a manner that is compatible with nature conservation and other environmental policies	The objectives outlined here are fully supported and developed in the Gaeltacht and we see further opportunities to identify and expand on those developments within our remit in the strategy.

<b>39.</b>	The NWRA shall coordinate the identification of the potential renewable energy sites of scale in collaboration with Local Authorities and other Stakeholders within three years of the adoption of the RSES	Reference can be made here to the LECO project funded under the EU INTERREG programme, the REACT project (funded under Horizon 2020) and Údarás na Gaeltachta and SEAI's joint programme – The Regional Energy Development Programme
<b>41.</b>	Encourage the development of the transmission and distribution grids to facilitate the development of renewable energy products and the effective utilisation of energy generated from renewable sources	Údarás na Gaeltachta are working closely with SEAI to implement a renewable energy strategy in the Gaeltacht through the development of BEC's and SEC's.
<b>42.</b>	Support the development of secure, reliable and safe supplies of renewable energy, in order to maximise their value, maintain inward investment, support indigenous industry and create jobs.	As 41. Above
<b>45.</b>	Promote innovative new building design and retrofitting of existing buildings, to improve building energy efficiency, energy conservation and the use of renewable energy sources in accordance with national regulations and policy requirements.	Through the participation in EU funded Renewable Energy programmes Údarás na Gaeltachta support this objective and its implementation in the Gaeltacht.
<b>64.</b>	<p>To enable the expansion of our Regional assets in the Blue Economy in the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marine Research and Innovation</li> <li>- Gas &amp; Oil deposits within Irelands waters</li> <li>- Seafood innovation through Greencastle, Killybegs, Páirc na Mara and other BIM fishery centres.</li> </ul>	Údarás na Gaeltachta has recently secured funding through the REDF to develop a Marine Innovation Development Centre (MIDC) at Páirc na Mara and support this objective within the scope of its remit

<b>65.</b>	Support the establishment of appropriate forums to enable industry thought leaders in Ireland to share knowledge and to identify critical competencies and skills needed to align with emerging business models.	Reference can be made to the ongoing work we are co-ordinating with the Regional Skills For a in establishing industrial training needs at a sectoral level
<b>66.</b>	Target academic research, training and development of a talent pool to support industry.	See 65. Above
<b>67.</b>	Support funding opportunities for indigenous start-ups and growth companies	Údarás na Gaeltachta provide supports for enterprise and entrepreneurial development within the Gaeltacht and support this objective
<b>68.</b>	Support the development of mentoring programmes to entrepreneurs.	Supports currently available through Údarás na Gaeltachta in the regions of Donegal, Mayo and Galway
<b>84.</b>	Promote, enhance and protect the linguistic, cultural and heritage value of our Gaeltacht Communities. Develop the Gaeltacht brand as a tool to provide competitive advantage.	This objective is an integral part of the strategy and implementation of Local Language Plans which are overseen and funded by Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. These planning initiatives need to be identified as the key planning framework for Gaeltacht development in terms of objective 84.

		A Gaeltacht brand which will function as a regional marketing and promotion tool for Gaeltacht enterprises has been developed
<b>85.</b>	Support the provision of low-cost, shared workspaces for the cultural sector; promote the provision of training, education and professional development opportunities for the cultural sector	The development of the Gteic hub network in the Gaeltacht areas of Donegal, Mayo and Galway supports this policy objective, a specific development is underway in Spiddal for the Creative Media sector.
<b>86.</b>	Support the provision of adequate broadband capacity that enables the further development of the vibrant film/video and digital media sectors in the region in particular and that facilitates collaboration between cultural sector practitioners – regionally, nationally and internationally	Údarás na Gaeltacht play a key role in the roll out of broadband infrastructure in the Gaeltacht
<b>87.</b>	Support the provision and/or upgrade of cultural facilities (eg multi purpose arts centres, theatres, galleries, libraries, museums etc.) where the public and visitors to the region may enjoy and participate in cultural activities, with particular priority given to the City of Galway, Regional Growth Centres, Key Towns and to Gaeltacht Towns.	Údarás na Gaeltachta support this objective through funding and other measures
<b>88.</b>	Support and assist the formulation and implementation of Irish Language Plans through the lead agency Údarás na Gaeltachta, across the Gaeltacht areas and within Gaeltacht Service Towns, as defined under the Gaeltacht Act 2012.	We suggest that there linkage to the county- and local-level plans is specifically recommended and referred to
<b>94.</b>	The advancement and growth of national and regional Greenway routes that shall include a number of high capacity flagship routes in this region and which can be extended and/or linked with local Greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure	Údarás na Gaeltachta will act as a key co-ordinator and promoter of Greenway development within the Gaeltachta districts as part of its

		tourism development strategy
<b>96.</b>	The development of local businesses, and start-ups in the vicinity of Greenway Developments.	See 94. Above
<b>106.</b>	Support the development and the protection of the fisheries harbours in the context of Brexit and its effects on waters available for Irish trawlers to fish.	Specific reference can be made to Ros a' Mhíl in county Galway in terms of Gaeltacht development
<b>127.</b>	In addition to the foregoing, specific transport network supports shall be provided for the Islands that shall provide for safe access by sea and include but shall not be limited to the following: Improved pier infrastructure on Inis Oír and Inis Meáin in the Aran Islands and at Machaire Rabhartaigh and New passenger ferry vessel for Oileán Thoráí.	Údarás na Gaeltachta fully supports the initiatives pertaining to the Islands within the Gaeltacht regions.
<b>136.</b>	Support the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan and grow the regional digital economy.	Údarás is co-ordinating the provision of services to Gaeltacht Industrial Estates and Business Parks
<b>148.</b>	To enable Public and Private Sector creation of a digitally connected innovation corridor connecting existing, emerging and new incubation spaces (ex Portershed, Building Block etc.) that will attract businesses and industries working in the digital economy and creative industries.	The Gaeltacht network of Digital Hubs currently supports this objective. The initiative is being implemented across the Gaeltacht districts within the region  RRDF funding has been secured for Gaoth Dobhair, a multi-site network of digital hubs in the Mayo Gaeltacht and the Spiddal Digital and Media hub

156.	With partners in IDA and other relevant agencies seed the architecture for a digital skills platform.	Údarás na Gaeltachta can be referred to in terms of FDI initiatives in the Gaeltacht districts
179.	Encourage multi-agency approaches for delivering the health, social care, education and community services needed by growing, diverse or isolated communities.	Údarás na Gaeltachta are currently co-ordinating such integrated approaches within the Gaeltacht
187.	The Assembly support the development of a safe, secure and reliable electricity network and the transition towards a low carbon economy centred on energy efficiency and the growth projects outlined and described in this strategy.	Údarás na Gaeltachta supports this essential objective as a priority measure within the strategy
198.	To support the Rural Water Programme which should be continued and enhanced.	Údarás na Gaeltachta supports this essential objective as a priority measure within the strategy

### **The Gaeltacht, Local Community Planning in the context of the NWRA:**

In the context of Údarás na Gaeltachta's statutory obligations in implementing the Language Planning Strategy for the Gaeltacht areas we feel that the map is essential to give an overview of the geographical areas which this strategy covers. We recommend including the maps which we have included in our previous submission.

#### *The Gaeltacht Act (2012) and Local Community Planning*

The Gaeltacht Act (2012) sets out the statutory responsibilities and development functions of An tÚdarás. The provisions of the Act provide for a more comprehensive and integrated view of regional and territorial development within the Gaeltacht.

In planning terms, the introduction of a new dimension to the local planning hierarchy through the establishment of Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas (designated by order under Section 7 (2) of the Act), and of Gaeltacht Service Towns (designated under Section 9 (1)), represents a new order of responsibilities for public agencies and for local communities alike.

These statutory provisions set out the bases under which local, area-based planning interventions (**Local Language Plans**) are to be drawn up in support of local

communities. These plans will include development measures to support the viability of the Irish language in the “[...] family, educational, public, social, recreational and commercial life of the area concerned” (Section 7 [6]).

Under the auspices of the Gaeltacht Act (2012), some 26 such **Local Language Plans** will be prepared by local community organisations across the different Gaeltacht districts. These community organisations act as the ‘lead organisation’ in each of the planning areas. These organisations have been appointed to this role through a consultative process overseen by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta. These community organisations work in close collaboration and on a partnership basis with key public sector and state agency stakeholders, community and voluntary organisations, private sector representative bodies and the relevant Local Authorities.

In the NWRA region, **Local Language Plans** will be prepared in the following Limistéir Pleanála Teanga/Language Planning Districts:

<b>County Mayo</b>	<i>Limistéir Pleanála Teanga/Language Planning Districts:</i>
	Maigh Eo Thuaidh Maigh Eo Thiar

<b>County Donegal</b>	<i>Limistéir Pleanála Teanga/Language Planning Districts:</i>
	Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall  Cloich Chionnaola, Gort an Choirce, An Fál Carrach & Machaire Rabhartaigh  Toraigh  Gaoth Dobhair, Rann na Feirste, Anagaire & Loch an Iúir  Na Rosa  Árainn Mhór  An Ghaeltacht Láir  Dún na nGall Theas

<b>County Galway</b>	<i>Limistéir Pleanála Teanga/Language Planning Districts:</i>
	Dúiche Sheoigheach & Tuar Mhic Éadaigh Conamara Láir An Cheathrú Rua Ceantar na nOileán Oileáin Árann Cois Fharraige Maigh Cuilinn Bearna & Cnoc na Cathrach Oirthear Chathair na Gaillimhe An tEachréidh

The development measures envisaged within these plans are closely aligned to the strategic priorities as set out in the Údarás na Gaeltachta development strategy. Such measures will be integrated within a planning model that addresses the complex of interdependent factors which impact on the resilience and the capability of local communities to protect and extend the use of the Irish language as the community vernacular locally.

These measures focus on the ‘community of language’ in their local and regional contexts. This operational context is fully informed by the economic development, employment and enterprise needs of such communities; by their housing, planning and local service requirements; by the educational, health and other social and public services upon which they are dependent.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation:**

In terms of monitoring and evaluation of the RSES, we recommend that timelines are agreed in relation to the specific targets/outputs as outlined in the strategy. We further recommend that key agencies are identified specifically who will hold responsibility for the delivery of outputs.

We congratulate the NWRA on the current draft and welcome this opportunity to have our comments and recommendations herein considered before the final draft is signed-off on and formally adopted.

**Error Correction:**

We request that the following error is corrected in the draft RSES before the strategy is finalised. On page 160, Section 4.2 Potential Údarás is referred to as Údarás na Gaeilge. Please amend to Údarás na Gaeltachta.

**February, 2019**